

[A. F. Duncan]

October 4, 1939

A. F. Duncan-(Shoemaker)

Newton, N. C.

Ethel Deal, Writer

Frank B. Rupert, Reviser Original Names: Changed Names:

A. F. Duncan P. A. Deacon

Dr. Raymer Dr. Reese

Walker County Wilber County C9 - N.C. Box 1.

"Yeah I own this shoe shop. I've got a good trade but I can't make a living at it."

The old man [?] out spit a chew of tobacco into a tin can, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand and went on with his work.

"I ain't much to complain. I just go on and do the best I can. My wife's been in the bed six years. The doctor says it's low blood pressure. My opinion is they don't know what they're talking about.

P. A. pulled out a tack with a pair of pliers and threw the shoe on a bench.

"I was born in Wilber County in 1891. My father was a farmer. We lived from hand to mouth. That's about all poor folks can do. If you live on a rented farm you can't make a living. Its not much better if you work for wages. The rich man gets it all. A poor man's

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nothing but a tool or piece of machinery in a rich man's hands. I got no education but a few months here in the public schools. My folks was bad to move around. There was nobody to make me go to school so I didn't go. When I was twenty one I joined the Regular Army and was there six years. I was a field musician and liked it fine. I'd have been better off if I'd 2 stayed there. At least I wouldn't have had to work myself to death trying to keep up a family that don't appreciate it.

“After I got married I worked in a curtain pole factory fer years. Seventy cents a day is all I made. We lived good on it and I saved some money. Things was cheap then and the women didn't have to have every thing that came along. If a man made twenty five dollars a day his wife and younguns would have it all spent before the end of the week. A woman will buy anything from a pack of needles to a washing machine from a agent. I got five children, two of them is married. I have to keep them all up.”

The old man shook his head.

“I tell you I'm getting fed up on it, I can't keep up such a crowd on what I'm making. We live in the cheapest house I can find, it's up at the railroad tracks and belongs to Dr. Reese. He's a dentist and charges a dollar to open your mouth. His old house leaks and it ain't no good, I pay five dollars a month rent.”

The old man took another chew of tobacco, aimed at the tin can and hit the floor.

So many people won't pay me. If I won't credit 3 them they go some where else, if I do some won't pay. I've never been able to get enough money together to buy me a car, and as for a home I couldn't make the first payment. A car would be more pleasure to me, I don't stay at home much no how. About all I'm interested in at the present is getting something to eat. I buy fat back for breakfast, once in a while we have steak or liver. I have to keep a woman to do the house work. I've got two grown girls; about all they do is walk

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the streets. One of them had a case in court about 9 month ago. I can't watch them and work too. Here son here's your shoes, the charge is fifty cents."

The colored boy rolled his eyes, only the whites showing.

"Mama said tell you she'd pay you Saturday."

O. K. you tell your mama I'll keep the shoes till Saturday."

"Yes Sir" said the boy as he backed out.

"Now that's the way it goes. I don't believe a darn thing a negro says. They'll bring the money or not get the shoes."

"I don't belong to church. They ain't in my line.

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Preachers these days get up and preach for the money. Churches ain't a thing but man made organizations. Here we're trying to stay out of war, and the fool preachers get up and preach for it. Besides I don't believe in Eternal torment. God is just, and the Bible says he is love. How then do you expect me to believe that God will let anybody go to torment and suffer? I don't believe any [sich?] a thing. If you want my belief and be sure and put it down, I don't believe anybody has a soul. When they die that is the last of them.

"I ein't got no ambitions, just to peg along suits me. I don't take no part in bell games or shows. When I want a little recreation and pleasure I get on a drunk, that's a big pleasure, I can forget everybody I [own?] and everybody that owes me. I usually land in jail and have to pay a fine. Its worth it though and I feel like the world and me is even. No don't thank me, I'm glad to get that off my chest. Its not often you have a opportunity to tell folks what you think, I enjoy it."